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THE COMPARISON OF SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES FOR
REGULAR AND SPECIALLY ADMITTED
AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES AT A PREDOMINANTLY
WHITE INSTITUTION

By
Corinne J. Gibson

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
Of
The Graduate School
At
Rowan University
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Approved by.
(Professor)

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ABSTRACT

Corinne J. Gibson

THE COMPARISON OF SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES FOR REGULAR AND SPECIALLY ADMITTED AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALES AT A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION

2004

Dr. Thomas Monahan

Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purposes of this study were to (a) compare the academic and social support services provided to regularly admitted African American females with specially admitted African American females all of whom attend a predominantly white institution, and (b) determine how responsive the predominantly white institution is to the academic and social needs of African American females. The academic and social support for both groups was similar with higher utilization and satisfaction of services among the specially admitted. However, the institution did not prove to be responsive to African American females in many of the social aspects. The results showed that the participants deemed most of the services significant but frequency of use and satisfaction were not prevalent. Implications as to how the predominantly white institution can be more responsive to African American females are discussed.

MINI ABSTRACT

Corinne J. Gibson

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This research project explored the differences in the academic and social support services provided to regularly admitted and specially admitted African American females attending a predominantly white institution. The results showed the services were similar but the utilization and satisfaction of the services were higher among the specially admitted.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two.....	6
Literature Review.....	6
African American Students in Higher Education.....	6
African Americans at Predominantly White Institutions.....	10
Women in Higher Education.....	15
African American Females at Predominantly White Institutions.....	17
Chapter Three.....	20
Methodology.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Setting.....	20
Sample.....	20
Instrument.....	21
Chapter Four.....	23
Findings.....	23
Descriptive Results.....	23
Demographics.....	23
Special vs. Regularly Admitted African American Females.....	24
Leadership Involvement.....	24
Student Affairs Support Services.....	25
Tutoring Center.....	25
Career and Academic Planning.....	26
Faculty Advisors.....	26
Faculty Mentors.....	27
Peer Mentors.....	27
Dean of Students.....	28
Library.....	29
Counseling Center.....	29
Residence Life.....	30
Comparison of Regularly & Specially Admitted Respondents.....	30
Chapter Five.....	46
Conclusion.....	46
List of References.....	49
Appendix A.....	51

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Deciding which college or university to attend is a monumental step for most young people. There is a different environment to adjust to along with the life-altering decisions students make as they choose their careers. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) express that the transition from a student's previous environment to the campus environment can influence whether or not a student will succeed, both academically and socially. Therefore, the student affairs administrators should place more emphasis on the transition of students to the campus community because it is essential to the students' retention.

For African American students attending a predominantly white institution, the need for social integration is very intense. Many African American students experience discrimination, isolation, and no identification with predominantly white institutions (Thompson & Fretz, 1991). Those students who have these types of experiences may not want to become involved in student activities and not receive the full benefit of attending college. Also, African American students are often from areas wherein they are in the majority of the population. When trying to adjust to the new campus environment, there is a definite need to experience a sense of belonging with the institution in both the academic and social arenas.

Because the mission of most colleges and universities is to aid in the personal and academic development of their students, organizations and activities should be arranged to foster social integration for students from all backgrounds and especially African Americans attending white colleges and universities. Student affairs administrators are

primarily responsible for the social aspect of campus life, and they should accommodate all types of cultures in student activities. Student involvement in out-of-class activities has been shown to be a key factor in academic achievement among college students. Colleges and universities need to form an inclusive community that acknowledges African American students' values within the campus community by establishing an array of programs that will accommodate all types of students (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).

As the social aspect of college is critical to the personal development of students, so also is academic support vital for students to be successful in the classroom. The academic administration should proactively participate in reaching out to the students before there is a problem, academic or otherwise, so that the students might feel more comfortable conversing with the faculty. This will add to the integration of the campus community.

There is an extra need to support African American female students in their higher education careers. The population of African American students attending college is predominantly female; yet their experience at white institutions is lacking academic and social support (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). There are great efforts in place to aid African American males because so many are not even applying for college, much less graduating (Fleming, 1984). However, African American females are often left without support in their newfound campus life. In addition, social support to cope with difficult issues may not be available for those African American females who choose to attend a predominantly white institution (PWI). Frequently, increased isolation is experienced,

which could lead to poor academic performance and, perhaps, potential dismissal or exit from the institution (Fleming).

The African American community, sometimes colloquially referred to as the “neighborhood”, is often found to be the focal place for social capital. Social capital, which describes the kinds of organizational relationships among people that facilitate collective action based on shared norms, obligations, and information, is necessary for African American students to receive both academic and social support. When the African American student leaves this environment to join a university community, there is a need to fulfill those same bonds and norms one experienced in his or her neighborhood. It grants the strong connection and sense of belonging that is critical for the academic and social success of African Americans attending PWIs. The social capital that is usually accrued within African American communities is often not sustained within predominantly white institutions. Yet, Coleman (1988) states that the amount of social capital one acquires while attending an institution influences the amount of involvement a student has on campus. So, it is in the interest of the institution to create programs that enable both special and regularly admitted African American females to receive the social and academic support needed to succeed.

Many colleges and universities have provided the opportunity for social capital to be accrued through support programs for those special admission students who require financial and academic support or who participate in athletics. The social capital created with special admit groups enables the participants to be better prepared academically while also becoming involved in campus activities. However, regularly admitted students are often left on their own to build their support structures and become socially

integrated into the new culture without any overt assistance from the institution. Also, those African Americans who are regularly admitted to the predominantly white institution are also in need of support. This task is more challenging for African American students attending white colleges and universities because they do not possess the same initial relationship with the institution as their white counterparts. Also, African American students may not perceive any effort from the college in welcoming them to the campus community. Without some type of connection with the institution, the African American student is more likely not to develop academically or socially (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).

Efforts to form inclusive communities should be done within the first year experience in college since it often influences the retention and graduation of students. Colleges and universities need to make every effort to create an environment that includes programs that support all students in the beginning of their college careers. Specially admitted students' needs should be addressed in these programs and be given academic and social support equal to that that is available for all students.

African Americans attending predominantly white institutions are especially in need of academic and social support. Often, there are support groups for African American males who enter college; yet African American females outnumber their male counterparts in enrollment in colleges and universities (Thompson & Fretz, 1991). So, there needs to be more programs geared toward aiding these African American females once they have entered the predominantly white institution. Those African American females who are specially admitted tend to receive the academic and social support needed to succeed in the PWI. However, those African American females who are

regularly admitted are often not provided these same support efforts. Thus, the literature review will discuss some of the history of African Americans in higher education and their experiences attending PWIs. Then the section will take a closer look at females in higher education with special attention given to African American females attending PWIs.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

African American Students in Higher Education

Opportunities to receive any kind of formal education much less attend higher education institutions in the United States were generally impossible for African Americans from their arrival in America in 1619 through much of the 19th century. It was only after the Civil War, in the latter part of the 19th century, that African Americans were given the opportunity to be educated. Through the laws of slavery, African Americans were prohibited from even learning to read and write, so college was not an option at all. Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 and the resultant freedom from slavery, educational opportunities for African Americans were very limited, and those who did seek or receive an education did so in the face of potential physical harm. Yet, despite such drastic restrictions on education for blacks in America, a total of 29 African Americans earned a baccalaureate degree from 1619 to 1850 (Humphries, 1995).

This effort to educate African Americans in the United States began in the mid-1800s as blacks earned degrees from schools in the north and obtained an education at the earliest historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) (Cowan & Maguire, 1995). During this time, African Americans in confederate states were not permitted to receive a formal education because it was against the law. The 13th and 15th Amendments aided in educating African Americans by giving them freedom and the rights to be recognized as complete and free individuals. As a result, these amendments granted blacks legal rights to receive a formal education.

There were scarce numbers of blacks who were able to obtain a college degree even with the emancipation laws. Yet, historically black colleges were established in the 1800's to educate African Americans who previously had no opportunity to receive an education. Between 1850-1856, only 5% of African Americans out of 4.5 million were able to read and write (Wilson, 1998). Many HBCUs aimed to provide an education to African Americans in an effort to give their graduates the ability to teach in the elementary school system. However, because most African Americans had very little, if any, educational experience, HBCUs had to initially teach at an elementary and secondary school level, before moving on to studies focused solely on higher education. As these institutions developed and others were organized as a result of the second Morrill Act in 1890, the opportunities at HBCUs increased and African Americans obtained the education that was previously denied (Cowan & Maguire, 1995; Brazzell, 1992).

Historically black colleges and universities were established to provide African Americans with a form of education that could be used to upgrade black labor productivity within racially prescribed roles. It was often believed that education could be used as a form of social control for African Americans, defining for blacks an educational process that would be used to train and socialize them for unskilled and semiskilled jobs such as sharecroppers, dressmakers, and household managers (Fleming, 1984).

Without historically black colleges and universities, even these positions would not have been attainable. Therefore, the importance of HBCUs can be clearly identified from their origins in the 19th century through the advancements made within the 20th century. Within each time period, HBCUs provided essential opportunities for the

African American community regarding both educational and employment opportunities. The educational opportunities provided through Lincoln University and other similar institutions that were created to educate the freed slaves were based on a curriculum that focused on the acquisition of basic, elementary skills. This curriculum continued throughout the early history of these institutions until students progressed beyond the elementary level. HBCUs gave African Americans the opportunity to learn the much-needed skills to compete with white Americans. In addition, African Americans without elementary skills needed a venue where they could obtain these skills without fear of additional discrimination or embarrassment. Also, as society evolved in the 20th century, so did the opportunities for African Americans in educational and employment opportunities at HBCUs. Over 2,000 African Americans had earned college degrees by the year 1900, and many of them became employed by the historically black colleges and universities (Cowan & Maguire, 1995).

The number of African Americans attending college in the United States had increased from the 1850's, but there was a brief decline thereafter. Within 1850-1856, only 5% of African Americans out of 4.5 million were able to read and write. From the 1860's to the 1940's, African Americans were not able to take full advantage of the educational experiences around them. Discrimination was yet very prevalent within education so not many African Americans received degrees during this time period.

However, one major event that influenced the enrollment of African Americans in higher education was the GI Bill of 1944. The GI Bill of Rights enabled an unprecedented number of veterans to attend college and trade schools, which greatly affected the composition of the traditional American college. Previously, only the elite

young white males were generally welcomed into the higher education community. But, with the passage of the GI Bill, individuals from all economic backgrounds, including African Americans and women, began to enter post-secondary institutions (Olson, 1974). Congressman John Rankin made efforts to keep the control of the budget away from the educators, thus helping to ensure that HBCUs would not be excluded from the benefits of the bill. This enabled many blacks to attend colleges and universities outside of the south (Ford & Miller, 1995).

Also, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits all forms of racial discrimination in programs receiving federal assistance and requires termination of such assistance to institutions that fail to comply, allowed African Americans to branch out into predominantly white institutions (Peterson, Blackburn, Gamson, et al., 1978). African American students began taking advantage of the opportunities denied blacks for so long. However, this desegregation process did not occur smoothly. Fleming (1984) states that the African American students' experiences at the white institutions were riddled with academic failure, demonstrations, and revolts. Today, the effort for social integration at predominantly white colleges and universities is not as violent, yet the struggle continues as the number of African Americans attending PWIs increases.

Between 1965 and 1980, the number of blacks in higher education soared from 600,000 to 1.2 million (Fleming, 1984). There was a decline in enrollment during the 1990's, and many attributed it to a lack of financial aid available to low-income students. Others also hold the rise in college standards of admission responsible for the decline in participation rates among African American students (Wilson, 1998).

During the 1990's, the participation of African Americans in higher education continued to grow as black students continued to attend predominantly white institutions. However, the percentage of African American students in comparison with white students is still low, and the graduation rates of African American students remain a dilemma at PWIs (Wilson, 1998). Although African American students are better prepared for college than they were in the past, the number of African American students completing college is declining (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996).

Many problems within society are factors as to why African Americans are not attending and completing undergraduate degrees. According to Reginald Wilson, there are more blacks than whites below the poverty level, and the unemployment rate for African Americans is higher than it was ten years ago (Wilson, 1998). However, despite all these obstacles, the number of first professional degrees awarded to African Americans continues to climb. Nevertheless, there is room for more improvement in these rates. For progress in the retention and graduation of African Americans, the policies and regulations of higher education need to be addressed. Issues such as what have been the consequences of certain historical periods on African Americans' educational experiences and how these experiences have shaped their contemporary experiences should be considered (Wilson, 1998).

African Americans at Predominantly White Institutions

In acknowledging the importance of both academic and social development for their students, most colleges and universities include these themes within their mission statements. However, social integration is impeded for many African Americans who

attend predominantly white colleges or universities (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). Perceived ethnic fit is more than having black student organizations on campus. African Americans' beliefs about themselves and their race are major factors in their compatibility with the institution (Chavous, 2000). Chavous found that black students from diverse environments perceive a better ethnic fit at PWIs than black students who come from predominantly African American environments. Also, students who are from diverse environments are more likely to participate in both non-ethnic and ethnic organizations at a predominantly white institution. However, the psychosocial development of African Americans who are not from a predominantly white environment may be inhibited somewhat, which makes it more difficult for them to achieve their academic and social goals (Chavous).

Those African American students with strong ethnic identities have a more difficult time achieving a perceived ethnic fit in a predominantly white college or university. Often, these students are involved in only African American activities, and the students may use them as support groups (Chavous, 2000). In addition, when there is no social support or full integration into the campus community, black students are more prone to experience depression. Regardless of background, if black students do not have a cultural connection within the college, their academic and social development can be negatively affected (Alexander-Snow, 1999).

When an African American student attending a predominantly white college or university does not perceive an ethnic fit with the institution, he/she may use different coping strategies to contend with the stress. Most commonly used is the social support coping behavior in which blacks group together to relieve the tension of no social

integration at the institution. Also the avoidance coping strategy is used in these situations, and this strategy is closely related to low self-esteem and life dissatisfaction (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Reynolds, 2000).

The academic adjustment of African American students in a predominantly white college or university depends not only on the perceived ethnic compatibility but also on the cooperation of the institution. Colleges that have the mission and philosophy of creating social integration will make every effort to accommodate all students, with an emphasis on diverse cultures. However, in PWIs, African American students often are not actively recruited into the institution unless it is for their athletic abilities. These factors are what may cause an unbalanced academic adjustment. Alexander-Snow (1999) found that unless the African American student perceived an ethnic fit in the institution, he/she would not be comfortable seeking out academic support. Most black students from low socioeconomic areas where public education is not well funded did not experience a diverse cultural environment and were not academically prepared to compete with their white peers, which could have aided in minimizing their lack of success (Fleming, 1984). Because of this, the level of education that many African American freshmen have when entering college is not the same as their white peers. Yet, once the college has granted admission to the black student, it is the college's responsibility to supply needed resources for the student to succeed both academically and socially (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).

Recently, more African Americans have been enrolling their children in independent high schools to better prepare them for college. These efforts have made a vast difference because when black students attend a high school that prepares them with

college preparatory classes, their academic adjustment is much smoother (Alexander-Snow, 1999). However, the mental anguish of the constant consciousness of being black on a white campus can stunt their academic growth. The institution can aid in the academic adjustment by supporting black students in every aspect of the college experience. This includes having faculty who are culturally sensitive as they prepare lessons and who encourage group activities where the students will have the opportunity to acculturate. In order for the black student to succeed academically at a PWI, there needs to be a cooperative learning environment. This will allow both black and white students to work together and not ostracize the black student who may feel incompatible with the group (Thompson & Fretz, 1991).

African American students' social integration into a predominantly white college or university is a major factor in their retention and ultimate graduation. Most PWIs are established in a Euro-centric culture, so the African American population is often neglected. Many of these colleges do not have any Afro-centric activities or organizations, and this can again make the African American student feel ignored (Douglas, 1998). Even when the black student is from a diverse high school or neighborhood, the student's assimilation into a mostly white culture is difficult. The black student does not adjust well with the black population because the black student who attended a multicultural high school has adopted a mixture of cultures. Nevertheless, the white population often does not accept black students because they are from different races. Therefore, without social adjustment, the African American student experiences low self-esteem and low confidence levels (Fleming, 1984). Black students

need to have some source of support in order to remain and complete their educations at predominantly white institutions.

There is also the issue of racism on the campus. African Americans in predominantly white institutions experience the same anxiety as other students, but the added stress of the new culture is often even stronger. There has been more of a tolerance of African Americans on white college campuses than an appreciation. Many people would like to ignore the racial tensions on American college campuses by stating that the campuses are as one loving multicultural environment. There are some researchers who believe that the need for multicultural programming is unnecessary because racism is not prevalent in American life (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996). However, the problem continues and the issues are focused more indirectly. The discrimination is not always directly shown from one person to another, but it is a socially organized set of practices that deny African Americans the dignity, opportunities, spaces, time, positions, and rewards this nation offers to white Americans. White students and faculty sometimes ignore racism, but there are many recent issues of discrimination in higher education (Feagin, Vera, & Imani). These feelings of discrimination can reflect greatly in the black students' life satisfaction and self-esteem. Also, when African American students experience racism on the campuses, their social life is damaged. Many will withdraw from any activities involving other races, and they could enter a state of depression (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Reynolds, 2000).

Some African American students attending a PWI try to tolerate the absence of their culture on the campus. The African American students will only participate in necessary activities with the campus, and all other extra activities take place off campus

or within the African American community. These actions defeat the institution's goal of students partaking in campus activities (Alexander-Snow, 1999). All of these factors relate greatly to the African American student achieving success at a PWI. Therefore, predominantly white institutions should work towards achieving social integration because this will benefit the entire campus population.

Women in Higher Education

The right for women to become learned individuals has been battled for centuries. From the beginning in the United States, women were considered less valuable than men, and the laws favored educating the men only (Solomon, 1985). Many of the distinguished women of the colonial era encouraged their husbands not to forget the ladies when establishing new laws. Abigail Adams, the wife of President John Adams, appealed to her husband for the advancement of women. She pointed out the many deficiencies in female education at all levels, and she asked that the new constitution be distinguished for learning and virtue. Just as male heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, women should have the same opportunity as men to learn. The American men did not agree with the philosophy of having educated women. The females were only respected when they married and had children and attended to their households as proper wives and mothers (Solomon).

The constitution purposely did not include women as equal rights bearers. Only white males were considered when the laws were made. In fact, it was quite by accident that women were allowed to vote in New Jersey from 1787 to 1807. There was a loophole in the law, which stated that all inhabitants of the proper age and property

qualifications could vote. Seventy-five women took advantage of this opportunity and voted during the 1800 presidential election. After 1807, the law was changed which specifically favored men in the voting process (Solomon, 1985).

However, the women of the new America continued to express their unhappiness with not being able to participate in education. There were some glimpses of hope for the effort during the 1850's when some coeducational and single-sex schools were organized (Solomon, 1985). One contributing factor for the advancement of women's education was the need for the women to teach their children. The women would have to be knowledgeable to be able to instruct their children properly. Also, the ideal Christian mother would have to read the Bible for religious reasons. Another steppingstone for women in education was the need for elementary schoolteachers for the single-sex schools. Many of these teachers saved their earnings so they could later attend college (Solomon).

The first women to attend college were not greeted with a warm welcome. Yet a small group of ambitious white women rose to the challenge and continued to attend. From 1870 to 1920, the percentage of women attending college rose from 21% to 47% (Solomon, 1985). Yet these women who were receiving a college education were from the rich and elite families of America because the cost of college was exorbitant.

As the women of America fought for equal rights in other areas of society, they continued to express the need for education so they could be independent. Yet this struggle did not include many African American women most of whom were too poor to attend and who were not invited to college (Solomon, 1985).

African American Females at Predominantly White Institutions

For the most part, the African American experience at a predominantly white college is the same for both genders. African American males and females both need to perceive an ethnic fit to be academically and socially successful in the college. However, the way that the genders handle the incompatibility and non-adjustment in a PWI is somewhat different. Most African American females use the seeking-social support-coping behaviors wherein black males prefer the avoidance-coping strategy when there is no perceived ethnic fit in the university (Utsey, Ponterotto, & Reynolds, 2000). Since African American females seem to need the social acceptance more than males, their experience at PWIs is sometimes more difficult because the support they need is often not available. The gender differences within the African American culture have also affected the black female experiences at a predominantly white institution. Most African American females socialize within their race, and there is often a great shortage of African American men on predominantly white campuses. This inherently affects the black females' social interaction (Fleming, 1984).

One major aspect in the social development of African American females is their self-esteem and confidence level. These characteristics seem to play a larger role in the academic and social development of African American women than they do in African American men (Chavous, 2000). At a predominantly white institution, the African American female is faced with many racial issues and has to deal with ethnic incompatibility (Fleming, 1984). Frequently, these hardships produce assertive and confident females who are struggling to receive equal rights both as African Americans and as females. Yet there are times when these hardships cause African American

females to leave the predominantly white institution (Alexander-Snow, 1999). Many of them leave these institutions in search of a less stressful environment in which to continue their studies. Unfortunately, some African Americans leave PWIs and do not continue their education at any institution.

According to Fleming (1984), the African American female often copes with feelings of inferiority to the male gender. These feelings are magnified when correlated with racial discrimination. African American females often have difficulty balancing the inequalities in the classroom and their social lives. The traditional freshmen orientation programs that most institutions have are not very useful to the African American female attending a PWI because the issues that she has are not addressed. Yet, if they can sustain the adversity of attending a predominantly white institution, they are most times academically successful (Fleming, 1984).

Although many African American females who are regularly admitted to predominantly white institutions are academically successful, many do not socially integrate to the campus environment. The academics may not be as challenging for the regularly admitted African American female as they might for a special admit, but there is still a need to connect with the campus (Fleming, 1984). Often these females do not participate in either African American-oriented or other organizations on campus because there is no perceived fit with the campus community.

Therefore, the retention of African American females is yet an issue in PWIs when compared to their white counterparts. As Tinto (1993) states, the number of students entering higher education has increased but the number who are graduating is diminishing. African American females are among those who are being accepted but not

completing their education. One of the reasons for low retention rates among African Americans is the lack of inclusive communities within many colleges and universities. Different programs and activities can be intertwined with the mission of the institutions in order to ensure a more inclusive community (Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1991).

This research project sought to explore the differences and compare the academic and social support systems for African American females who were specially admitted to a predominantly white institution with those of African American females who were accepted to a predominantly white institution under regular admittance. Also, the research sought to explore and compare the amount of support received by members of each group, as well as the retention rates of these students. The following questions guided this research:

1. How is the academic and social support different between special and regularly admitted African American females attending a predominantly white institution?
2. How do both special and regularly admitted African American female students perceive the predominantly white institution?
3. How responsive is the predominantly white institution to the academic and social needs of African American females?
4. Is there a difference in the academic and social support of those African American students who are residential and those who are commuters?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This section describes the methods by which the research was conducted. It includes a description of the institution where the study was performed and also explains briefly the type of environment in which the institution is located. Further, the samples of subjects from whom data were collected are described and discussed. Finally, the instrument used to collect data is described and discussed.

Setting

This study was conducted at a four-year public university that is located in a predominantly white suburban area in the northeast region of the United States. The 200-acre campus has 31 buildings including 8 residence halls. Enrollment levels are reaching 10,000 with both undergraduate and graduate students combined, and the university offers nearly 30 undergraduate programs. The predominantly white university enrolls mainly mid-Atlantic region students with a small percentage of foreign students. In the fall 2001 semester, approximately 10% of the student population was African American and approximately 5% (440) were African American females.

Sample

The participants of this study included African American females attending the university full time and residing either on or off campus during the 2001-2002 academic year. There were 440 African American female students enrolled in the university and a stratified random sample of these students was formed using on-campus, commuter, and

class year as categorical variables. This yielded 165 students all of whom were contacted to participate in the study. From this sample group, 68 students responded, for a response rate of 41%.

Instrument

A survey was prepared that asked questions pertaining to students' demographics, student affairs leadership involvement, and the perceived need for some student services. Frequency of use and satisfaction of these student affairs offices were also included in the survey.

The demographic section included age, class status, major, and residency with regard to whether the student lived on or off campus. These questions were presented by category so the student could mark the one in which she belonged. A question about their admissions process was also asked within the demographics section to differentiate the regularly admitted students from the specially admitted students.

A section regarding student involvement in leadership positions on campus was included. This section asked questions pertaining to the student's leadership opportunities within extra curricular activities.

Another section of the instrument explored the extent of importance of various student affairs offices and programs. A Likert scale, with responses ranging from *very important* to *not important*, was provided.

The frequency of use of the student affairs services was also surveyed. The students were given a Likert scale on their use of the services ranging from *very frequently* to *never*. A Likert scale also assessed the satisfaction of the various student

affairs services. A 5-point scale was used ranging from *very satisfied* to *not applicable*. A final section was provided for any additional comments to be added. The survey was field tested with a smaller sample of African American females at the same institution, and the questions were revised as needed.

The participants received the surveys and were given a 2-week period to respond before more surveys were distributed. After the first 2-week period, email reminders were sent to those who had not responded. After another 2 weeks, the survey was concluded and the returned surveys were analyzed by using SPSS.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Descriptive Results

Demographics

First, the participants were asked their age and class status. The categories for age ranged from 17 to 25 or older and the choices for class status were freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. The results showed that most of the participants were 25 or older (44%). Of the remaining students, 29% were between the ages of 20 and 22, 12% were 23-25 years old and 15% was between 17 and 19 years old. The ages of those surveyed also reflected their class status with the majority (55%) of the students being seniors. Eighteen percent were juniors, 12% sophomores, and 15% freshmen.

The participants were also asked about their majors and living arrangements with regard to living on or off campus. The results showed that the students' majors did vary, but mainly within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Fifty-five percent of the respondents were pursuing a degree within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and 21% were studying in the College of Education. The Colleges of Business and Communications represented only 9% and 15% respectively. However, there was no representation from the College of Engineering or the College of Fine and Performing Arts. Regarding the students' residency, the results showed the African American female students surveyed were mainly living on-campus (42%) or living independently off-campus (33%). The remaining participants (24%) commute to the institution from their family homes. These results also correspond with the age and class status data received

since most of the subjects from each of these groups were seniors who were 25 years old or older.

Special vs. Regularly Admitted African American Females

When the respondents were asked to indicate their admissions status, 53% stated that they were regularly admitted to the university while 29% stated they were specially admitted. Eighteen percent did not recall their admissions status. However, of the 29% who were specially admitted, 27% were accepted through EOF/MAP (Educational Opportunity Fund/Minority Achievement Program), which aids financially and academically disadvantaged students. Only 2% of those who stated they were specially admitted marked “other” as a form of their special admission but no category was written in the space given.

Leadership Involvement

The survey addressed the African American females’ involvement as leaders in student activities on campus. Questions were geared to ascertaining whether the participants held elective offices in these activities. The results showed that only 6% held some elective office, and only one of those four African American females was elected to a non-culturally based organization. The other three were officers within African American sororities. There was also a question relating to a student organization for non-residential students. Neither leadership nor involvement was prevalent within the student commuter association. Only 3% of the participants were involved in this organization, which was created to provide those students who commute to the institution with opportunities to become part of the on-campus culture. Also, athletics were not an

activity in which many of the African American females who responded participated. Only 6% of the sample participated in either intramural or intercollegiate sports.

Student Affairs Support Services

The objective of student affairs services at any institution is to develop activities that benefit the students both academically and socially. There are some basic programs included in this university that are standard at most higher education institutions and some programs that are unique to this university. Asking the participants how important the service was to their continued success at the institution was how each service was assessed. Likert scales, which ranged from *very important* to *not important*, were used to rate the respondents' feeling of need for the various services. The students were also asked to rate their frequency in utilizing the student affairs service on a scale ranging from *very frequently* to *never*. Also, the satisfaction of the services provided was rated from *very satisfied* to *not satisfied*. The following is the result of these ratings in each student affairs service.

Tutoring Center

The data showed that 41% of the respondents (n = 68) believed the tutoring center was a *very important* asset to have for success at a college or university, and 23% ranked the center as *important*. *Somewhat important* and *not important* were tied with 18% each. However, when the respondents were asked to rate their use of the service, 62% had *never* utilized this center, and 29% stated that they used the center *sometimes*. Only 9% of the African American females surveyed used the tutoring center *very frequently*.

Of those who ranked their satisfaction with the program, a little less than half (44%) were *satisfied* with its performance. There were only 6% who were *very satisfied* with the tutoring center. Of the remaining participants, 44% responded that they were *somewhat satisfied* and 6% were *not satisfied*.

Career and Academic Planning

The results were similar for the CAP Center (Career & Academic Planning) in which the majority of the participants believed the student service were *very important* (35%) and *important* (44%) to their success at the institution. Only 12% thought the CAP center was *somewhat important* and 9% believed the CAP center was *not important* to their continued success. When the students were asked about their frequency of using this service, 50% answered *sometimes* and 38% responded that they *never* used the CAP center. Only 12% stated they used the center *very frequently*. Of those African American females who did utilize the center, 21% were *very satisfied* and 42% were *satisfied* with the service given. Of the remaining participants, 33% were *somewhat satisfied* and 4% were *not satisfied*.

Faculty Advisors

Faculty advisors aid students in choosing the correct path for the career that they wish to pursue along with some general academic advice. The participants in the survey agree that faculty advisors are significant for their success in college as almost half (49%) the students stated the advisors were *very important* and 46% answered *important*. Only 5% responded that the faculty advisors were *somewhat important* and *not important*. The

respondents portrayed the importance of faculty advisors with 56% stating they consulted with their advisor *sometimes* during their academic career, and 38% answered that they consulted with them *very frequently*. Only 6% responded that they *never* consulted with their faculty advisor. When asked about the satisfaction with the advisors, 24% were *very satisfied* while the majority (41%) stated that they were *satisfied*. Only 15% said they were *not satisfied* with their advisor and 18% were *somewhat satisfied*.

Faculty Mentors

The faculty not only serves as advisors to the student body but many participate in mentoring programs on campus. Of the African American females surveyed, 32% believed this student service was *very important* and 32% stated it was *important*. The respondents answered *somewhat important* and *not important* both at 18%. However, more than half of the participants (59%) had *never* used this program, and 32% said they used their faculty mentor *sometimes*. Only 9% stated that they used their faculty mentor *very frequently*. Yet, those students who did take advantage of the faculty mentor program seemed *satisfied* with the student service (53%) and 29% were *very satisfied*. Twelve percent were *somewhat satisfied* and 6% answering *not satisfied*.

Peer Mentors

This institution also has a peer mentoring program, which gives upperclassmen an opportunity to share their experiences with students who have just entered the institution. Having a peer mentor was only *somewhat important* (32%) to the majority of African American females surveyed, while 26% thought it was *important*. Only 18% believed

the peer mentor program was *very important*, and 24% stated it was *not important* at all to their success in college. The use of this program by the African American females surveyed parallels their belief in its importance; 82% reported that they *never* used the peer mentor program. Of the remaining participants, 9% answered *sometimes* and 9% stated they used the program *very frequently*. Of those who did respond to the satisfaction portion of the question, 42% were *satisfied* with their peer mentors and 25% answered *somewhat satisfied*. Only 17% responded that they were *very satisfied* and 16% were *not satisfied*.

Dean of Students

The Dean of Student's office is often thought of only for student discipline problems. However, at this institution, this office facilitates other student leadership programs that give students an opportunity to acquire skills that will aid them in their academics and future career goals. The participants believed the Dean of Students' office was essential with many (38%) responding that it is *important* and 27% stating it is *very important*. Of the remaining participants, 23% answered that it was *somewhat important* and 12% stated it was *not important*. The use of these programs was not as prevalent with only 9% stating that they were involved *very frequently* and 32% responding *sometimes*. Unfortunately, there were 59% who stated they *never* used the Dean of Students' office. Of those who responded to the satisfaction portion of the survey, half of the respondents (50%) were *somewhat satisfied* with the office while only 15% were *very satisfied*. Twenty percent responded that they were *satisfied*, and 15% answered that they were *not satisfied* with the office.

Library

One of the main buildings on any college or university campus is its library. This facility is often used in rating the institution on its research capacity. Therefore, students should be very familiar and comfortable with the library. Most of the participants (71%) agreed that the library is *very important* to their success at the institution and 23% stated it was *important*. Only 3% answered that it was *somewhat important*, and 3% said it was *not important* to their continued academic success. More than half of the respondents answered that they used it *very frequently* (53%) and 44% stated they used it *sometimes*. Only 3% answered that they *never* used the facility. Also, the satisfaction with the library was equally felt by the respondents with 52% of them stating they were *satisfied* and 33% were *very satisfied*. Again, only 3% responded as *not satisfied* with the library while 12% were *somewhat satisfied*.

Counseling Center

The counseling center is a student service unit that is often only thought of during a crisis. However, the services that the center provides can aid students in coping with pressures and transitions that may interfere with their academic progress. Most of the respondents rated the counseling center as being *important* (38%) and *somewhat important* (29%) with only 9% viewing it as *not important* at all. Twenty-four percent stated that the center was *very important*. When asked about frequency of use of the center, almost all the respondents (85%) stated they *never* used it, and only 3% answered *very frequently*. Only 12% stated that they used the center *sometimes*. In addition, of those who did answer the question regarding the satisfaction of the service, 42% stated

that they were *somewhat satisfied* and 17% answered *very satisfied*. Only 8% were *not satisfied* at all with the counseling center services and 33% were *satisfied*.

Residence Life

The residential life office handles housing issues on campus along with providing activities for the student body. Thirty-two percent of the participants believed this office was *important* to their success at the institution, and 15% stated it was *very important*. However, 29% believed it was *not important* at all to their continued academic success, and 23% thought it was *somewhat important*. When asked how frequently the participants utilize the services of the residence life office, the results showed 41% used the service *sometimes*, and 59% stated they *never* used the services. For those who answered the question on satisfaction with this office, 44% stated they were *somewhat satisfied* while 25% were *satisfied* with the program. Nineteen percent responded they were *very satisfied*, while only 12% was *not satisfied* at all with the services of the residential life office.

Comparison of Regularly & Specially Admitted African American Females

The needs of both regularly and specially admitted participants are discussed in this section. The results of the data show that most of the participants (53%) were regularly admitted to the university with only 29% who were specially admitted. Eighteen percent could not recall their admissions status. The importance, frequency, and satisfaction of student services as it compares to the participants admissions status is explored in this section along with a comparison of the differences, if any, between the regularly and

pecially admitted participants. Cross tabulations were performed to examine how each of these groups of African American female participants viewed the student support services provided by the institution.

In addition, with the majority (57%) of the participants living off-campus and non traditional in age (44%), the results showed the needs of these students more than the needs of African American females who live on campus (42%) and are 17-25 years old (56%). This was evident when comparing the importance of many of the support services between specially and regularly admitted participants.

Tutoring Center

The tutoring center was considered *very important* by many of the participants with 40% of the specially and 33% of the regularly admitted reporting as such. Also, 20% of the special and 28% of the regularly admitted participants stated the tutoring center was *important* to their success in higher education. Many of the specially admitted females (40%) thought it was *somewhat important* with 11% of the regularly admitted agreeing. However, 28% of the regularly admitted African American females stated the tutoring center was *not important* to their academic success.

When the frequency of use was asked to both groups, there was an observable difference. The majority (72%) of the regularly admitted participants reported *never* using the tutoring center and only 5% stating they used the center *very frequently*. The data for the specially admitted students also shows the majority (50%) stating they *never* used the center and 20% stating they used the tutoring center *very frequently*. The difference between those specially admitted students using the tutoring center *very*

frequently and *never* was less than the regular admitted students but yet a significant disparity. Almost all of the regularly admitted females *never* used the services of the tutoring center wherein more of the specially admitted females reported using the center.

When asked about the satisfaction of the services rendered by the tutoring center, the majority of the answers ranged between *satisfied* and *somewhat satisfied* from both groups. The regularly admitted females were split between *satisfied* and *somewhat satisfied* with 50% in each category. The majority (50%) of the specially admitted participants were *satisfied* with 33% being *somewhat satisfied*. There were 17% of the specially admitted students who were *very satisfied* with the service rendered by the tutoring center. None of the participants from either group stated they were *not satisfied* with the center.

Career and Academic Planning

When the career and academic planning (CAP) was reviewed for importance by both specially and regularly admitted African American females, for the most part both agreed that the center was an asset to their college experience. Fifty percent of the specially admitted and 39% of the regularly admitted participants stated the CAP center was *important*. There were also some females who were regularly admitted (33%) and some specially admitted (30%) who thought the service was *very important*. However, there were some who believed CAP was not significant to their college success with 11% of the regularly and 10% of the specially admitted students reporting it was *not important*.

When comparing the number of African American female respondents that were actually utilizing the CAP center, the results were not as promising with 50% of the

regularly admitted and 20% of the specially admitted females reporting they *never* used the center. However, there were a great number of specially admitted (80%) and regularly admitted (39%) participants reporting to have used the center *sometimes*. Then there were 11% of the regularly admitted respondents that stated they use the CAP center *very frequently*.

Of those participants who stated they did use the center's services, the majority were between *satisfied* and *somewhat satisfied*. Of the specially admitted respondents, 62.5% were *satisfied* with the services received from the CAP center while only 27% of the regularly admitted participants agreed. However, the majority of the regularly admitted students (46%) were *somewhat satisfied* and 27% of them were *very satisfied*. Of all the respondents, only 12.5% of the specially admitted students stated they were *not satisfied* with the center.

Faculty Advisors

The African American females viewed faculty advisors primarily as being essential to their success in college with 52% of the regularly admitted and 40% of the special admitted participants stating they were *very important*. *Important* was not far behind with 60% of the specially and 35% of the regularly admitted students reporting in its favor. Only 6% of the regularly admitted females reported faculty advisors were *not important*.

When asked about frequency of use of the faculty advisors, 70% of the specially admitted and 44.5% of the regularly admitted females stated they consulted with their advisor *sometimes* within their college career. Thirty percent of the specially admitted

even stated they used them *very frequently*, with 44.5% of the regularly admitted agreeing. Only the 11% of the regularly admitted participants stated they *never* used their faculty advisor.

The satisfaction of the respondents was also quite positive in that the majority of both regularly (41%) and specially (50%) admitted participants stated they were *satisfied* with their faculty advisory experience. There were some in both groups that were *very satisfied* with their experience with 29% of regularly and 20% of specially admitted females reporting as such. There were some participants from both groups who were only *somewhat satisfied* or *not satisfied* with their faculty advisor. Eighteen percent of the regularly admitted and 10% of the specially admitted was *not satisfied* with the services. Also, 20% of the regularly and 12% of the specially admitted were *somewhat satisfied*.

Dean of Students Office

The importance of the Dean of Students' office varied with both groups of participants. Twenty-eight percent of the regularly admitted and 10% of the specially admitted students agreed that the Dean's office was *very important* to them. The majority of African American females from both specially (40%) and regularly (39%) admitted respondents stated the Dean of Students' office was *important*. There were some who did see the need for the office as *somewhat important* with 30% of the specially admitted and 22% of the regularly admitted participants reporting as such. Twenty percent of the specially admitted and 11% of the regularly admitted females stated the Dean of Students' office was *not important* to the progress of their college career.

When the participants were asked concerning their use of the Dean of Students' office and its facilities, the majority of both specially admitted (60%) and regularly admitted (55.5%) stated they *never* utilized them. Of the respondents, there were some specially (30%) and regularly admitted participants (39%) who stated they used the Dean's office *sometimes*. Only a few from each group (10% of specially admitted and 5.5% of regularly admitted) stated they used the office *very frequently*. Of those who did utilize the Dean of Students' office, the majority from both groups were *somewhat satisfied* with the outcomes. Forty-three percent of the specially admitted and 60% of the regularly admitted females reported they were *somewhat satisfied* with the Dean of Students' programs. Some of the respondents did report being *very satisfied* with 14% of the specially and 10% of the regularly admitted participants reporting as such. The same percentages were also *not satisfied* with the service of the Dean's office. Also, 29% of the specially admitted and 20% of the regularly admitted participants was *satisfied* with the programs of the Dean's office.

Library

When the importance of the library was reported, 70% of the specially admitted and 72% of the regularly admitted respondents answered it was *very important*. The trend of significance continued with 30% of the specially and 17% of the regularly admitted stating the library was *important* to their academic success. Only 5.5% of the regularly admitted stated that the library was *somewhat important* and 5.5% reported it was *not important*. The frequency of use of the library was in good in relation to importance with 70% of the specially and 50% of the regularly admitted females reporting they used it

very frequently. Also, 30% of the specially admitted and 44 % of the regularly admitted participants stated they used the library *sometimes*. Only 6% of the regularly admitted females reported *never* using the library facilities. The satisfaction of the African American females use of the library also seemed to be positive with 50% of the specially admitted and 23% of the regularly admitted stating they were *very satisfied* with the services of the library. Still, 30% of the special and 65% of the regular admitted students reported they were *satisfied* with the library. There were some who responded that they were *somewhat satisfied* (10% specially and 12% regularly) and 10% of the specially admitted participants stated they were *not satisfied*.

Faculty Mentors

In analyzing the faculty mentors program, the majority (40%) of the African American females that were specially admitted to the university and 12% of the regularly admitted students stated that it was *important*. However, the majority (33%) of the regularly admitted and 30% of the specially admitted participants rated the faculty mentor program as *very important*. Both the specially and regularly admitted had some respond that the program was *somewhat important* (10% and 28% respectively). There were also some who thought the faculty mentor program was not important at all with 20% of the specially admitted and 22% of the regularly admitted reporting as such.

Then as the frequency of the use of these mentors was analyzed, most of the specially admitted females (50%) used them *sometimes* while 67% of the regularly admitted stated they *never* used the program. Only approximately 10% of each of the groups stated that they utilized the faculty mentors *very frequently*.

With the satisfaction of the program, 57% of the specially admitted stated they were *satisfied* while 57% of the regularly admitted and 14% of the specially admitted females stated they were *very satisfied*. The other specially admitted females (14% each) stated they were *somewhat satisfied* and *not satisfied*.

Counseling Center

The counseling center of the university was analyzed and 70% of the specially admitted and 33% of the regularly admitted participants stated it was an *important* program. Only 17% of the regularly admitted stated it was *very important* while the majority (39%) of them said the counseling center was *somewhat important*. Twenty percent of the specially admitted agreed that the center was only *somewhat important* while there was 10% of the specially and 11% of the regularly admitted that stated it was *not important*.

The report of the use of the counseling center was very bleak with the majority of both the specially and regularly admitted reporting they *never* utilized it with 80% and 89% reporting respectively. Only 20% of the special and 11% of the regularly admitted respondents stated they did use the counseling center *sometimes*.

With those who did report using the center, 20% of the specially admitted stated they were *very satisfied* with the services. Twenty percent of the specially admitted and 60% of the regularly admitted stated they were *satisfied* and 60% of the special and 20% of the regularly admitted females stated they were *somewhat satisfied* with the center. There were 20% of the regularly admitted females who were *not satisfied* with the counseling center at all.

Peer Mentors

The peer mentoring program was also analyzed for this study and 30% of the special and 22% of the regularly admitted stated that it was *important*. There were some of the participants who stated that it was even *very important* with 20% of the special and 17% of the regularly admitted students reporting as such. There were 30% and 28% of the groups respectively that reported peer mentors were *somewhat important*. However, there was 20% of the special and 33% of the regularly admitted females who answered that peer mentors were *not important* to their achievement in higher education.

When asked concerning the frequency of use of this program, 60% of the special and 89% of the regularly admitted respondents stated they *never* used it. Twenty percent of the specially admitted stated they used it *sometimes* and 20% answered they used it *very frequently*. With the regularly admitted, 5.5% stated they used peer mentors *sometimes* and 5.5% stated they used it *very frequently*.

Of the few participants who did report utilizing the peer mentor program, 43% of the special and 50% of the regularly admitted females reported they were *satisfied* with the service. Only 29% of the specially admitted stated they were *very satisfied* with the program while 14% were *not satisfied*. The regularly admitted participants did not seem to enjoy the program as well with 25% reporting they were *somewhat satisfied* with the program and 25% stating they were *not satisfied* at all.

Residence Life

The residence life department was also a service that was observed in this study and 60% of the specially admitted participants reported it was *important* with only 22% of the

regularly admitted agreeing. Even 10% of the special and 11% of the regularly admitted reported that it was *very important*. However, the majority of the regularly admitted respondents (45%) stated residence life was *not important* to their success in higher education with 10% of the specially admitted reporting likewise. In addition, 20% of the special and 22% of the regularly admitted stated residence life was *somewhat important* towards their achievement.

When asked concerning the frequency of use regarding residence life, none of either group reported they used it *very frequently*. The majority of the specially admitted (80%) stated they used it *sometimes* with 33% of the regularly admitted also stating as such. Also, 66% of the regularly admitted and 20% of the specially admitted reported *never* using the residence life programs.

Of those who did make use of the residence life services, 22% of the special and 16% of the regularly admitted stated they were *very satisfied* with the services. Thirty-three percent of the special and 16% of the regularly admitted answered that they were *satisfied* while the majority of both the special (33%) and the regularly (50%) admitted stated they were *somewhat satisfied*. However, there was 12% of the special and 16% of the regularly admitted students who stated they were *not satisfied* with the residence life program.

Summary

When comparing the results of data between the specially admitted and regularly admitted African American females, many of the services were utilized more so by the specially admitted participants.

The regularly admitted participants stated that many of the services were *very important* but yet did not use them. The data provide an idea of the academic and social support available to both regularly and specially admitted African American females attending this predominantly white institution. Also, the respondents' perception of the academic and social support provided by the institution is considered along with the institution's responsiveness to the needs of its African American female students. Whether or not the academic and social support offered differs between the residential participants and those who commuted is explored. This section discusses these outcomes of the data in conjunction with studies that portray similar findings.

Of those African American females who were specially admitted, 90% were a part of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF). This program provides both academic and social support for its students. This may be the reason why those specially admitted to the PWI did not utilize many of the other student affairs services provided. Many of the same type services are given within the EOF program and the number of participants is small which causes for more bonding.

The data suggest that the number of academic support services available at the PWI is adequate for its student body. Also, when the participants of the survey were asked about the importance of these services being available, their responses were generally positive. However, most of the results showed that the regularly admitted African American females did not utilize these programs very often. The majority of these respondents used the essential services such as the library and faculty advisors frequently, but the other academic support services showed less usage. One reason why the participants did not use these services may have been simply because the academic support services were

not as directly connected to their achievement. The majority of the participants reported being regularly admitted into the institution, and therefore may have been high academic achievers without a need for such services as the tutoring center or the CAP center. Also, many of them lived off campus and may have been self sufficient in regards to study habits and career counseling.

The social support services provided by the institution were not all perceived as being as important as the academic services by either the regularly or specially admitted students. Both groups of respondents reported average importance for such programs as counseling center, faculty mentors, peer mentors, Dean of Students, and residence life. These programs are geared toward aiding students in developing personal interaction and social skills through their involvement in campus activities (Astin, 1993). Social development and involvement in these programs have also proven to increase the retention and satisfaction of its students (Tinto, 1993). However, the regularly admitted African American females surveyed did not frequent many of the social services, and the satisfaction of them was slightly below average. Chavous (1999) reports that African Americans attending a predominantly white institution need to have a perceived ethnic fit to be academically and socially successful in the institution. This may have occurred because the participants did not perceive an ethnic fit with the campus environment, and an inclusive community in which social capital could be accrued was not found.

Regarding differences between the academic support received by specially admitted African American females and those who were regularly admitted, the results did show a difference in the use of the services. The specially admitted females did not utilize the academic services very often but those who did found the services *satisfactory*.

However, the data suggest that the regularly admitted participants did not use them at all. Again, this finding could be simply because the regularly admitted African American females did not need the academic support. The reason could also be because they did not have a sense of belonging to the institution. The specially admitted participants who were part of the EOF/MAP program were part of a 6-week pre-college institute in which the students were given the opportunity to become familiar with the institution before the academic year began. These same students were the participants who held leadership positions in extra curricular activities on campus. This finding seems to suggest that those specially admitted students may have been encouraged to become involved by their counselors within the special admit program (EOF/MAP).

When the social support of both the regularly and specially admitted students was compared, the data showed no substantial difference between them. African Americans who are from a diverse environment may be able to be more successful and satisfied at a PWI than those who are not (Allen, 1985).

Both groups thought the social services were of average importance. Yet, their utilization and satisfaction with the services were reported as slightly less than average. These findings could be a result of a lack of programming and role models that reflect the African American culture. The African American females may have not participated because their needs were not accommodated within the social programs. Also, with respect to the mentoring programs, the African American females may not have identified with the mentors.

Those African American females with strong ethnic identities may be able to cope with non-inclusive institutions more successfully when they do not live within the

campus environment. Chavous (2000) states that it is more difficult for African Americans with strong ethnic identities to become involved in a non-inclusive institution. As many of the participants were students who lived independently off campus, this may be why many of them did not try to integrate into the campus community.

Therefore, the demographics of the participants could have contributed to the results of many of the survey questions. Many of the respondents were students who were 25 years old or older and attending the college not expecting to achieve social support. The institution is located within close proximity to a metropolitan area so many of the African American females were able to socialize within their own ethnic environment. These demographics could have affected the results of the study because the findings showed both the residential and commuters not participating in many of the social support services.

The results showed that many of the African American female participants were regularly admitted into the institution. This has a great significance on the academic performance of the students. Often African American females are successful academically at PWIs, but they lack the social support services that would enhance their growth as individuals (Fleming, 1984). These females may have been academically prepared to compete with their white student colleagues and therefore not interested in the academic support services available to them. However, the opportunities for social capital development on campus are limited, and the institution did not seem to adequately identify and serve the needs of these African American females.

Another reason for low participation in social events on campus may be because the institution did not have a culturally integrated staff working these services. Furthermore,

the interests of African Americans in general may not have been represented by these services, which would not encourage the African American females to participate.

Even though most of the participants were seniors, many (42%) of them lived on campus. The reasoning behind this could be that they wanted to experience the campus life culture. Yet, the students may have found the campus was not responsive to their needs, and no activities that would allow for this to occur were presented.

The results suggest that many of the African American females, both specially and regularly admitted, are more interested in those activities that directly affect their academic process and not with those services that provide leadership skills or other cultural opportunities. Also, the participants may be receiving these social skills and opportunities from within their cultural environments or may be sacrificing the chance to develop these skills in order to attend the PWI. Also, the results suggest that both the regularly and specially admitted African American females are aware of the benefits of participating in these student services but, for some reason, are not motivated to actually utilize the services.

African Americans attending predominantly white institutions should consider both their academic and social support, which will enable them to successfully complete their college experience. The demographics of the study sample seem to have strongly influenced the results. With most of the participants being seniors who are 25 years old or older, the responses to many of the questions could have been related to their senior year experiences. Also, with the majority of the regularly admitted respondents living independently off campus, many of them may have been adult learners as they are not within the traditional college ages of 18-22 years old.

With regard to the Dean of Students' office, many students generally associate this office with student discipline and therefore do not affiliate any other student services with this office. This could be one reason why both groups of participants did not frequent this office. However, at this institution, the Dean of Students' office has many other activities in place to encourage student leadership. The females could have participated in these activities that would have enhanced their college experience through obtaining leadership skills and having and improving social skills.

With the residential life office, there are many activities that are offered to the student body in order to provide diverse experiences to build community among the students. These programs can be attended by both on-campus and off-campus students. However, many of the regularly admitted students did not participate in these programs which could have been because of the inconvenience of coming to campus or staying on campus in the evenings. The regularly admitted participants also may have not been aware of these programs or did not see the need to attend. However, many of the specially admitted students who did live on campus did perceive the importance of residence life to their college experience. The frequency of utilization of these services was yet not very impressive with either group. But the majority of the specially admitted students (33%) did state they attended sometimes. Of those who did make use of the events, many of the specially admitted females were satisfied with their experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

As this study explored the academic and social support services of African American females attending a predominantly white institution, the results suggested that some of the differences between the regularly and specially admitted students were not as significant as previously thought. However, the results did show there were a significant number of both specially and regularly admitted African American females not utilizing many of the services offered by the institution. An adequate number of programs were offered to aid students both academically and socially. However, the presentation of these services may not have been appealing to the African American population which may have caused the low numbers in frequency of use of many of the programs. Also, the institution may not have considered the needs of African Americans to feel a sense of belonging to the campus environment.

The African American females could also be more involved in the campus community. The institution did have some programs geared towards African Americans, yet only those who resided on campus usually participated. The commuter students seemed less engaged in the social aspect of the college experience, and there can be many reasons why this type attitude was adopted. However, this disengagement may not be solely because of the African American females' needs but also those of all commuters. Therefore, the institution should be interested in forming a socially integrated environment so that all students will feel ownership of the institution.

Overall, the study was able to analyze the type of services rendered by the institution and the attitude of the African American females towards these services. The

study was limited in that it did not ask participants about their involvement in campus activities in general and not just in leadership positions. This would have produced data that showed how involved African American female participants were on campus and if they were satisfied with the activities presented by the institution.

African American females are studied separately as they are the largest minority population enrolled in college today. Yet, with their commitment to their culture, it is becoming more and more important for colleges and universities to be inclusive environments. This institution seems to have some programs that promote social integration, but they are not actively working to engage the students that are already a part of the environment. The sense of belonging that occurs when a group has formed common norms and values strengthens the self-esteem and makes an atmosphere more conducive for learning.

As the respondents rarely used the services available to them, it would have been beneficial to know why they had not participated. The females had already acknowledged the importance of these services but yet did not use them. For future study, the reasons why the females did not utilize the programs should be examined along with a comparison with the majority population. This would aid the institution by granting data that would give a framework for which to form programs that will serve its entire community.

The basic idea is to make the college experience of African American females as positive as possible. With the number of African American women attending colleges, the higher educational institutions will need to address their student affairs administrators in providing a socially integrated environment both academically and socially. This will

encourage African American females to become involved at least as attendants to activities and then hopefully in leadership positions.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Letter and Instrument

April 1, 2002

Dear Students:

My name is Corinne Gibson and I am a graduate student working on my master's thesis project in the Educational Leadership Department at Rowan University. I am writing to solicit your participation in a research project concerning African American women attending a predominantly white institution. As an African American female, I am aware of the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture while balancing the stress of being a college student.

The reason I am pursuing this research project is to explore the academic and social support of African American females who choose to attend a predominantly white institution. Also the study seeks to determine your satisfaction with the support services that you experience while a student at Rowan. It is very important for you to respond to this survey because the data collected could lead to future programs geared towards supporting African American females both academically and socially.

This survey is anonymous. Please do not put your name or any other information on it that would identify you. Be assured that your confidence will be respected and no information will be reported in any way that personally identifies any respondent. The code number that you see on the survey is for follow-up purposes only. Please return your completed survey in the self-addressed envelope by April 10, 2002. It should only take about 15 minutes of your time to complete.

Again, I thank you in advance for your participation in enhancing the future African American female students who will attend Rowan University.

Sincerely,

Corinne J. Gibson

Student Survey

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested.

Please check the correct answer.

1. AGE

☐ 17-19

☐ 20-22

☐ 23-25

☐ 25 or older

2. CLASS RANK

☐ Freshman

☐ Sophomore

☐ Junior

☐ Senior

3. RESIDENCE

☐ Live-on Campus

☐ Live in off-campus

housing (near campus)

☐ Commute from family
home

☐ Live independently off-
campus

4. Please write your major: _____

5. When you received your letter of acceptance to Rowan, did the letter indicate that you were being accepted in a special admissions category? (Please check one.)

☐ Yes

☐ No (If you checked no, skip to question # 7)

☐ Don't remember (If you checked don't remember, skip to question # 7)

6. If you checked "yes" to the above question, please indicate the category in which you were admitted. (Check all that apply.)

☐ EOF/MAP

☐ Fine Arts (Art, Music etc.)

☐ Athletics

☐ Other (Please indicate what program) _____

7. Are you a member of a sorority? Yes_____ No_____

8. If your answer was "yes" please check your sorority affiliation

_____ Alpha Kappa Alpha _____ Delta Sigma Theta
_____ Zeta Phi Beta _____ Sigma Gamma Rho
_____ Other (Please indicate) _____

9. Do you hold an elective office in any of the following: (Please circle)

	President	Vice-Pres.	Secretary	Treasurer
Sorority	1	2	3	4
SGA	1	2	3	4
SAB	1	2	3	4
BCL	1	2	3	4
Other	1	2	3	4

10. Do you belong to the Commuter Association of Rowan? (CAR)

_____ Yes _____ No

11. Do you participate in any intercollegiate or intramural sports programs at Rowan University?

___ Yes (if yes, which one(s) _____)

___ No

12. To what extent do you think each of the following is important to your continuing success at Rowan University?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Tutoring Center	1	2	3	4
CAP Center	1	2	3	4
Faculty Advisors	1	2	3	4
Dean of Students Office	1	2	3	4
Library	1	2	3	4
Faculty Mentors	1	2	3	4
Counseling Center	1	2	3	4
Peer Mentors	1	2	3	4
Residence Life	1	2	3	4

13. How frequently do you use the services of these university units? (check one response for each item.)

	Very Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Tutoring Center	1	2	3
CAP Center	1	2	3
Faculty Advisors	1	2	3
Dean of Students office	1	2	3
Library	1	2	3
Faculty Mentors	1	2	3
Counseling Center	1	2	3
Peer Mentors	1	2	3
Residence Life	1	2	3

14. How satisfied are you that these services are helping you to achieve your academic and social goals and objectives at Rowan University? (Check one response for each item.)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	N/A
Tutoring Center	1	2	3	4	5
CAP Center	1	2	3	4	5
Faculty Advisors	1	2	3	4	5
Dean of Students	1	2	3	4	5
Library	1	2	3	4	5
Faculty Mentors	1	2	3	4	5
Counseling Center	1	2	3	4	5
Peer Mentors	1	2	3	4	5
Residence Life	1	2	3	4	5

Please use the following space to make any comments you wish regarding the support services at Rowan.

Thank you very much for participating in this survey.

